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## The Changing Sentence Structure of Children

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**I**t is a common complaint, almost too common for mention, that in education we constantly conduct research and content ourselves with reducing our findings to tables and sentence conclusions; that there is an increasing gap between laboratory research and school-room practice. It is the purpose of this paper to present a study, completed by the writer some two years ago, in which certain language developments were studied, and to report in addition the results of an experimental program embodying the principles suggested by the study.

It is not possible in this discussion to detail the study on which the experiment is based. A thorough report of the investigation is available elsewhere<sup>1</sup> and can be consulted by anyone wishing to verify the accuracy of the more general statements made here.

The matter of language development has too long been avoided by teachers of English. Perhaps because the study of the vernacular grew so rapidly, perhaps because language is so enormous and so complicated a life function, or

perhaps because English entered the area of teaching after the study of foreign tongues had been fairly well established, we have all too frequently considered the teaching of English as the teaching of a matured expression, regardless of the fact that we have not known how the child of ten used the language. We have made general statements about increasing complexity, but have largely failed to discover what *degree* of complexity was achieved at any given age level. Amazingly frequent have been the studies of the errors made by children in their writing and speaking, with almost no studies of what children can do. A comparable study in vocabulary might run something like this: There are a half million words in the English language. To teach the child to speak and write more effectively, our first task is to list the four hundred eighty thousand words which we can be fairly certain he does not know. This is to say that our attitude toward the development of language skill has been that of correction rather than construction. We would not try to teach a child of two to use colors as we would a child of eight. We know that at two the child cannot distinguish shades and colors as

<sup>1</sup> LaBrant, Lou L., "A Study of Certain Language Developments of Children in Grades Four to Twelve, Inclusive," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, Volume VIII, No. 6, November-December, 1933.

he can at six. One further illustration may be permitted here. Teachers have been known to ask children to list new words, and to do other cruel and unusual things in an attempt to increase vocabulary. If Terman is correct in finding that a normal ten-year-old has a vocabulary of 10,800 words, but that two years later he will know 14,400, it becomes clear that the sensible thing is to depend upon maturation, knowing that the fifteen or fifty words per year which we may teach by artificial stimulation are as nothing compared with what the child will learn for himself if allowed the opportunity to live naturally. We are dealing with an enormously complicated, with a magnificently intricate activity. In the English tongue are five hundred thousand words. You and I know less than a fifth of them even if the most extravagant estimates are true, and if we happen to be the most intelligent persons on the continent. But even if we are rather dull and the estimates are far too high, we undoubtedly know fourteen or fifteen thousand. Notice what even a six-year-old has learned. He has probably acquired five thousand words. These cover eight categories. He has learned to put these together according to a system so complex that you and I have not skill enough to make it clear to the average adult. He has learned to say "I go," instead of "Go I," or "Me go," or "Go me." He says "Give me a book," distinguishing between the placement of the direct and the indirect object, between pronoun use in the declarative and the imperative sentences, between pronoun form for the nominative and the objective uses. All this he does without our amazement, because he can do much more; for without any direct instruction in most cases, merely by imitation and reflection, he has acquired before he sees the school, a technique so complicated that we have difficulty in analyzing it. You may say that he has

learned this without any thinking. It does not matter what you call his elaborate process. For example, it is probable that at one time this child said "We wented to the country." He had observed then, this child of two or three, that in order to express past time we add *ed* to the present stem of our verbs. He had not then noted the irregular verbs. At six he has done that and says "We went," and "I saw" without error.

The conclusion which must be drawn from the foregoing is that the use of language acquires a tremendous force and develops remarkable skills quite irrespective of school-room teaching; that so great does this informal learning become that the teacher of language may well question his need or effectiveness, and that it is imperative to study how the child talks, and to know what he can do without our teaching. Nothing could be more wasteful than to spend two years teaching a language form which will develop without teaching.

In general, two approaches are possible to an investigation of either collective or personal language development. We may, first, make a quantitative study, counting the number of different words used and the frequency of their appearance in the vocabulary. Usually such investigations have been related to the language development of very young children. Comparable data for older individuals are usually secured by some sampling device. Even so small a vocabulary as that possessed by the pre-school child offers difficulties, however. The same word or spoken symbol may serve several purposes. *Orange* is both a fruit and a color; one word to this child, two to that. *Good* has a half dozen meanings. Derivatives offer another problem. Shall *go* and *went* both be counted? Probably so, but what of *go* and *gone*? Are they less different than are *walk* and *walking*? Distinction must also be made between used

and understood, understood and defined, spoken, written, and read vocabularies. Such differences account in part for discrepancies found in estimates of adult vocabularies, which range from 18,000 to 100,000 words.

A second approach is a functional one: not a study of how many words the individual knows, but of how he uses them. Such a study may take the form of an analysis of the child's language according to the parts of speech used (i. e., the ways in which he uses individual words), the types of sentences used, or the length of sentences. The writer has discussed these approaches elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> In the study here reported the clause rather than the sentence was used as the unit of comparison. It is perhaps necessary to point out briefly the advantage offered by the clause. Length of sentence often depends entirely on skill or judgment in punctuation. "I visited the museum; my friend enjoyed the shops," may be one sentence if I use a semi-colon. It may become two if I prefer the effect. The use of *and* is a third variant, offering no indication of changed relationship. We may thus have two independent sentences, or one compound sentence. In either case the speaker has affirmed two judgments of equal merit, and expressed them in parallel forms. Length of clause, therefore and type of clause appear the more significant measures. Since every finite predicate indicates the existence of a clause, approach to the present investigation was made through the tabulation of predicates. This recognition of the clause or of the predicate as the key to coherent thinking has long been accepted. It is interesting to know that Hobbes called attention to the importance of the predicate as compared to other elements of the sentence, and that Leibnitz<sup>3</sup> denominated his theory the

*plus quam nominalis* theory, thus suggesting the inadequacy of any mere catalog of words. Jespersen,<sup>4</sup> has emphasized the importance of the relationships indicated by subordination and coordination of clauses, and recently Piaget<sup>5</sup> has made elaborate use of the thought changes indicated by changes in clausal relations. It has not been the purpose of the writer's study to investigate why these changes occur, but rather to discover how they appear. Therefore the study has concerned the relative number of dependent clauses used in the free writing of children, the nature of those clauses, and their changing relations to each other.

Data for the study were obtained by analyzing the written composition of three groups of individuals, designated as groups A, B, and C. Group A consists of 482 pupils in grades four to nine, inclusive; group B, of 504 pupils in grades nine to twelve, inclusive; and group C, 21 eminent psychologists, contributors to *The Psychologies of 1930*.<sup>6</sup>

Pupils whose writing was studied are from the schools of Baldwin, Holton, Lawrence, and Leavenworth, Kansas. All are small towns, free from foreign populations. The pupils chosen were all of those present on the days on which the tests were given in the schools or grades selected. The study thus analyzes the writing of 986 children in grades four to twelve, inclusive, and of twenty-one adults.

Two types of data were secured for each of the 986 children (groups A and B): mental test scores on group intelligence tests, and written compositions. Both types of data for each group were secured on the same or successive days. Two group tests were used: for grades four to six, inclusive, the *Haggerty Intelligence Examination, Delta 2*; for grades seven to twelve, inclusive, the

<sup>3</sup> Jespersen, Otto, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin*, p. 251.

<sup>5</sup> Piaget, Jean, *Judgment and Reasoning in the Child*.

<sup>6</sup> *The Psychologies of 1930*, edited by Carl Murchison.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, Chapter I, "The Nature of the Problem".

<sup>3</sup> Mill, John Stuart, footnote in *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, Vol. 1, p. 162.



*Terman Group Test of Mental Ability, Form A.* Tests were given by the writer and two assistants, high school instructors experienced in the administration of tests. Mean intelligence quotient for group A is 104.55 with a sigma value of 16.4; for group B, 102.55, with a sigma value of 10.82.

Since the purpose of the study was to determine the tendency of the child to express relations, it appeared desirable to secure written matter approaching natural expression as nearly as possible. The writer acknowledges that it is impossible to accomplish this result perfectly. There is frequently a large gap between natural expression and the stilted performance which passes as school composition. Constant attention to form and punctuation often causes the child to omit ideas when he is somewhat uncertain as to the accuracy of his expression. For the above reasons, great care was exercised in securing the written work. Pupils in group A (482 children in grades four to nine) were told that certain people at the University of Kansas were studying the matter of the school vacation; that it seemed wasteful for teachers and pupils to have the summer off when business men and other people worked almost the year through, and that these educators were considering a plan for carrying the schools on throughout the summer. They felt that perhaps the pupils should have a voice in the matter, and wanted the opinions of school children as to the value of summer vacations. Pupils were then given sheets of paper and asked to write their ideas on the matter. The plan was used in an attempt to secure (a) papers written so rapidly that attention to punctuation, spelling, and form would not modify the expression; (b) written work colored as little as possible by the school-room attitude and adult quotations; and (c) material concerned with the vital interests and experiences of the children. That the re-

sults are at least in part satisfactory is evidenced by the content. The average length of the compositions is approximately 130 words. Considerable disrespect for school limitations and products is expressed freely. The sincerity and consequent absorption of the writers in the content are indicated by threats to quit school, to join the navy, and to show in various ways marked defiance to any move to lengthen the school year. In only one case does the pupil generalize throughout the paper. In the other 481 papers the pupils enumerate their own experiences as evidence. The subject gives opportunity for argument, exposition, description, and narration. Narration of summer experiences predominates. Because they were too mature to be impressed by the directions given the younger children, pupils in group B were asked to write about the best vacations they had had, or to discuss the merits of a three months vacation. Pupils in one group (Oread Training School) were unusually proud of their reading accomplishments, and were given the option of writing about a favorite book.

As will be explained later in this paper, it seemed desirable to compare the writing of children with that of superior adults. Two samples were taken from the discussion of each psychologist in group C, approximately the first twenty lines of each article in *The Psychologies of 1930*, and approximately the first twenty lines of the tenth page of each article, or forty lines from each writer.

The papers for the 1,007 individuals were carefully analyzed, and each of the 20,320 predicates classified. A total of 161,518 running words was thus studied. All predicates were placed in one of two categories, independent or dependent. Of the 10,320 predicates studied, 6,596, or approximately 32½ per cent were dependent.

Although it is of importance to know



the degree of complexity in language development, that is, the relative number of dependent and of independent clauses, the writer chose to carry the investigation farther to discover what types of clauses were present in any given group. It seems important, for example to know whether, from fifty dependent clauses, forty are clauses of time or of purpose. Consequently the clauses of the 482 children in group A were classified not only as to dependence or independence, but dependent clauses were classified as adverbial, noun, or adjectival. Adverbial clauses were further differentiated as to the expression of time, cause, condition, concession, place, purpose or result, and comparison.

Occurrence of infinitives was also recorded, Smart's definition being accepted. ("An infinitive is a form of a verb introduced normally by the sign *to*, and used as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb."<sup>7</sup>)

An index of subordination was computed for the work of each individual, and the indexes arranged in order of the mental ages of the writers. From tables thus secured, the following conclusions seem warranted.

The tendency to increase the percentage of subordinate clauses used is a function of increasing mental age, but is modified by the chronological age of the child also. That is, when we consider pupils whose mental age is, let us say, 120-129 months, we find their mean subordination index higher than that for pupils of mental age 110-119. If, however, within any mental age unit the writing of pupils with high chronological age is compared with that for younger (or high I. Q.) pupils, the high I. Q. pupil is found to have the lower index. In other words, increasing complexity of sentence structure is a function of increasing mental age, but is

modified by increased chronological age. Both findings support the theory that sentence structure is the outgrowth of experience, and develops as expression rather than impression.

The foregoing findings may at first appear to contradict the results found by Miss Frogner and recently reported in *The English Journal*.<sup>8</sup>

Miss Frogner states: "Considering all three grades, there is no positive relationship between intelligence and the use of sentences with dependent clauses." It should be noted that the present writer's study deals with *clauses* or *predicates* rather than *sentences*. A sentence with two dependent clauses indicates more complexity of thought than one with one subordinate predicate. Similarly, a sentence with four coordinate clauses and one dependent clause is complex, just as is one containing a main clause, and two dependent clauses. These differences would seem to account for the fact that in Miss Frogner's study no relation between intelligence and sentence structure was apparent. Although in the writer's study the individual samples were probably insufficient measures, correlation of the subordination index with mental age yielded a coefficient of  $0.29 \pm .03$  and with chronological age, a slightly higher coefficient of  $0.41 \pm .03$ .

When the dependent clauses used by group A were studied as to functions, most interesting relations became apparent. The mental ages of the group A pupils ranged from 101 to 230 months. Pupils in the lowest mental age unit, 101-110 months, used only 13.7 dependent clauses, while those in the upper levels wrote as many as 31.4 dependent out of every one hundred clauses. It is interesting therefore to note that pupils in the lowest (youngest) group used the same types of clauses as did

<sup>7</sup> Smart, Walter Kay, *English Review Grammar*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>8</sup> Frogner, Ellen, "Problems of Sentence Structure in Pupils' Themes", *The English Journal*, November, 1933, pp. 742-749.

those eight years older (mentally), and with approximately the same relative frequency. Clauses of concession were an exception, but as even the oldest pupils used only one concessive in five hundred clauses, the difference is not remarkable. In other words, development in the use of dependent clauses, or complex structure, appears to be a gradually enlarging function of maturation. The significance of this inference for teachers of language is clear. If language structure is the outgrowth or expression of experience, artificial stimulation of basic structure is fruitless, or almost fruitless at best.

Close examination was therefore made of the content of the subordinate clauses written by group A. The first 25 per cent of each type of clause written by each mental age group were arranged in order of the mental age of the writers.

Study of the time clauses disclosed a change in the content in addition to the increase already noted in the relative frequency. At the lowest mental age level every clause was introduced by *when*. Time sense is comparatively *v a g u e*. *When I wake up and eat my breakfast I will go walking* relates a series of events in temporal order. *When school is out I will be glad* suggests to the adult; *I will be glad because school is out*. The child's expression merely indicates association of the ideas, *being glad* and *having no school*.

Apparently again we find in the use of dependent clauses and conjunctions a gradual clarifying of ideas. If the conclusion is sound, it becomes fruitless to expect results from telling the child about "and" sentences. He develops causal clauses when he comprehends a *cause*.

Study of the other types of clauses confirms the foregoing. The larger number of types apparently offer no structural difficulties inherent in the kind of clause, if one may judge from the lack of structural errors found in

this study. Adjective and comparison clauses offer some exceptions. It is interesting to note that Frogner's study, previously mentioned, confirms this finding. The lack of *structural* errors is most significant and adds emphasis to the deduction that experience and structure go hand in hand; that when the child writes or speaks of an experience which has become clear, he can manage the construction. The futility of providing him with sentence structures in the hope that he may fit them some day upon an appropriate experience would seem too absurd for mention were it not true that in hundreds of schools we are doing just this thing.

Significant also in the writer's data, is the almost complete lack of sentence fragments of any kind.

The suggestion is offered that, although pupils wrote rapidly and had no opportunity even to re-read, expression was complete because the child was writing only of comprehended experience. Conversely, we may consider the possibility that sentence fragments (unless of course, written for effect) are the result of *incomplete* thinking caused by artificial stimulation rather than by complete experience.

For purposes of comparison the writing of the adults mentioned previously was used. Whereas the most mature twelfth grade pupils used approximately 36 per cent dependent clauses, the psychologists studied used 45.9 per cent. Again it should be noted that this study concerns clauses and not sentences. The adult group wrote few simple or compound sentences. Although they were using expository material while the children used all types, the inference may be drawn that many high school students have not reached adulthood in the use of sentence structure.

During the past year and a half it has been the writer's privilege to work at the Ohio State University experimental school. Here it has been possible

to teach the vernacular on the basis of the principles just suggested. Pupils in the seventh and eighth year groups have no classes in what we ordinarily term composition. The core course for these years begins with work in the school, home, shop, and studio, leading out from these activities to a study of the community. The child's community is, of course, a gradually enlarging area, in some phases including the entire world, and going back to the beginnings of civilization; in others reaching far beyond the immediate planet. Regardless of whether he is working in the shop, studio, or laboratory, of whether he is visiting a day nursery, a factory, or museum, or is reading about the invention or discovery of the first wheel, he is using language. It has been our theory that, if his natural use of language were carefully stimulated, if he were assisted to express fully those experiences which are really his, there should be no doubt that language growth would be evident. We have assumed that writing is a necessary function of living in a modern world, but that, since it is a function of living, it should not be necessary for the teacher to assign writing, nor to determine its form or content. In consequence the teacher of English, or, as we prefer to consider him, the language assistant, has been present in this arts-science-social science class, providing information about conventions, but offering no assistance as to sentence structure other than insistence that the pupil finish his language problem, whatever it may be. Perhaps this should be made more specific.

Punctuation is taught, not as an external skill, nor as a body of information applied to the work in hand, but as a socially familiar way of clarifying what the pupil has already said. The usual explanation runs something like this: "People use a mark like this, called a semicolon, where they have two ideas held together as you have these." Usual-

ly the question comes from the child. An amusing example occurred recently. A child approached the teacher of English. "Miss W— says that you know a sign that will make the sentence straighten up," he said. The instructor noted the sentence and presented the advantages of a colon. The child left, remarking to his companion: "That is a tricky little mark, isn't it?" The little incident illustrates the principle of the whole course. The child must have the need before he is given the information. Learning to use the colon became the same thing as learning the name of a new object.

Certain outstanding advantages of teaching language thus from the inside out, instead of from the outside in, are in harmony with the findings of the study at first reported.

1. There is almost no appearance of fragments. By that I mean real fragments, and not misplaced punctuation marks. Occasionally a pupil cuts a phrase off from the rest of a sentence by use of a period or semicolon, but this happens infrequently and is easily corrected because, the idea being his, and being related in his own mind, he readily sees the phrase as part of the main sentence. Serious fragments, phrases or subordinate clauses which have no independent element from which to hang, do not occur. The reason is obvious. If the child is told to write about what he sees from the window, it is possible that he will look out and write something like this: "Having noticed how green the grass is—" He does not complete the sentence because it is not his sentence. He had no main idea, and consequently expressed none. In contrast, when a boy has made a fire shovel he does not say, "Having twisted the iron—" and then stop. He says: "Having twisted the iron, I fastened it to this piece." He finishes the sentence because the experience is finished also; and he says his main clause because its



# Considerations in the Development of Children's Language

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THE MAJOR problems to be dealt with in this paper are: (1) How does written language develop in the elementary school grades? and (2) what is the meaning of this development in relation to the program of instruction?

The data for analysis were obtained from the writings of 368 pupils of a public school in Chicago. These data consisted of more than 15,000 sentences written on seven different topics.

Since it is not feasible to present a great number of statistical data, the quantitative aspects of the study will be presented very briefly. The average number of sentences written by the sixth grade children was from 40 to 60 per cent more than the number written by the third grade writers. The evidence is clear that both boys and girls wrote appreciably more in each grade from fourth to sixth inclusive than did the children in the preceding grade. It is equally clear that the girls in each grade studied wrote more than did the boys. Not only did the more advanced pupils write a larger number of sentences than did the younger pupils, they also wrote longer sentences, particularly those of simple and complex construction.

It is difficult to know the meaning and significance of such facts as those just presented. It seems that the very young writer must exhaust momentarily his mental energy in relatively short sentences, and in relatively few statements concerning a given subject. His span of attention less frequently reaches the extent required in conceiving the longer and more complex sentences more often used by older children.

In addition to the quantitative data just presented, careful analysis of the compositions was made to determine trends of development in sentence structure. The analysis of gross elements of sentence structure revealed a consistent development from grade to grade in the proportions of simple and complex sentences. The ratio of simple sentences to the total number written decreased from about 55 per cent in the third grade to about 43 per cent in the sixth. The ratio of complex sentences to the total number of sentences increased from about 28 per cent to about 36 per cent between the third and sixth grades. The use of complex-compound sentences increased from about 6 per cent to 11 per cent for the period studied.

The run-on sentence constituted roughly 2 per cent of the total number of sentences written by the boys of the third and fourth grades and about one per cent in the case of the girls in the same grades. Above the fourth grade there was a marked decrease.

Further analysis of sentence structure revealed additional evidence of development in written expression. For example, many compositions contained some particular phrase or form of expression which was repeated three or more times in consecutive order. A few examples will make clear the nature of the construction.

I like to ride on a horse a very lot.

it is a lot of fun.

I like to ride in an airplane to.

it is a lot of fun to.

I like to ride on a steam boat to.

it is a lot of fun to.

—Boy, 3-B.

I had a ride on a elevator.  
It is a lot of fun to ride on a elevator.  
I like to ride on a elevator.

—Girl, 3-B.

This is what I did last week. Last week I cleaned the carpets for my mother, and washed the dishes for my mother, and dried the dishes for my mother and washed the ceiling for my mother.—Boy, 4-A.

Such instances of persistence of form were found to occur much more frequently in the third and fourth grades than in the fifth and sixth. In fact, 53 per cent of all cases found occurred in the writing of third grade children, and 23 per cent in fourth grade writing.

A further analysis of sentence structure was concerned with the use of inverted order of subject and predicate. Of this type of construction 71 per cent of the cases occurred in the fifth and sixth grades. In addition to the more dignified examples of inverted order many examples like the following were found:

Boy, was I lucky?  
Ooooo, were they sour.  
Was I ever glad.  
Oh boy, do I love raw carrots.

All cases of this particular form of slang were found in the writing of fifth and sixth grade pupils. When, therefore, the total number of cases of inverted order including slang is considered, 80 per cent of all cases occurred in the writing of the more advanced pupils.

Other cases of slang also were found in much greater proportion in the fifth and sixth grades than in the third and fourth. This fact may be considered another item of evidence indicating the reduced restraint, greater freedom from language inhibitions, and the increased facility and fluency of the older children.

Less variety and consequently less refinement in meaning — less choice in points of emphasis—are characteristic of the writing of the younger child. He says whatever he has to say simply,

directly, and in the most conventional and most frequently practiced form because it is most convenient and most economical of mental energy. The inception of inverted order signifies a degree of mastery over language which enables the writer to give emphasis to one idea or constituent part of his thought by increasing the prominence of its position. To do this requires a span of attention sufficiently great to allow for some choice and reorganization of sentence elements before they are expressed.

In addition to persistence of form and the use of inverted order of subject and predicate, sentence structure was further analyzed to derive whatever meaning might be revealed by the position of modifiers. Numerous examples of misplaced modifiers were found. They suggest that in the mind of the writer there is some urge to use qualifying words, phrases, and clauses even though he lacks the critical, analytical ability to arrange all members of his sentence in the best order while he writes.

Examples of adverbs misplaced in relation to the word they modify are contained in the following sentences:

*Outside* my girl friends and I like to play jump rope.—Girl, 4-B.

When I learned how to swim, I swallowed *almost* the lake, but now I can swim.—Girl, 5-A.

I have been trying to do those tests you were giving us *very hard*.—Girl, 5-B.

In the examples cited above there is clearly an obscuring of the meaning by the position of the adverb in the sentence.

Children are apparently much more practical than critical in their attitude toward language. They use no more precise expression than is required to convey the essential meaning with which they are concerned, even though they are fully capable of more refined thinking than some sentences would imply.

Substantially all the examples of misplaced modifiers are instances in point. Note also the following:

I put some buttons down the front *made of coal*.

I think that carrots are good for growing children *cooked or raw*.

Other evidence of the tendency of children to draw together as compactly as possible the essential elements comprising their statements is indicated in the irregular position given to objects in certain sentences. The following are examples:

In our school I think there should be some men teachers because the *ladies* none of the boys like for gym.

I did but the *others* I don't know about.

In the first sentence *men teachers* and the alternative must apparently be as directly contrasted as possible. Similarly, in the second sentence *I* and the *others* are conceived in a contrasting relationship and they are, consequently, placed as close together as possible in the sentence, with whatever other elements may be necessary to complete the thought, attached as best they may be.

The following sentences contain objects in the initial words. The order is evidently determined by the dominance of the idea in the object over the assertion.

*Hide and seek* I like best because I am hardly (ever) it.—Girl, 5-B.

*The elephants and bears* I liked very much.—Girl, 4-A.

*The things that you taught us* I want to thank you for.—Girl, 5-B.

*Marbles is a great thing*, I think—Boy, 5-A.

There is indicated in the foregoing examples the immaturity of impulsiveness, a putting of first ideas first in expression without weighing the remaining elements of the thought. If the receiver of the action is a peculiarly dominant element in the conception of the thought, it is, as indicated in the examples cited, directly and abruptly named.

Two further aspects of growth in children's writing may be briefly indicated. Nearly fifteen thousand nouns were classified in six categories of generality of meaning. The first category contained the names of simple objects or acts: specific, concrete, individual, capable of being apprehended directly through a single sensory experience as *house, Dad, water, jump*. In the sixth category were placed the very general comprehensive terms suggesting a universality in meaning, as, *truth, life, nature, death*. Between these extremes were defined four other categories of generality. The proportions of the concrete meanings as represented by categories I and II decreased consistently from lower grades to higher. The proportions of the more abstract meanings represented by categories IV, V, and VI increased from lower to higher grades with equal consistency and in equal, perhaps greater, degree.

The evidence points clearly to the conclusion that the older children used, among the nouns required to write the papers which were analyzed, a smaller proportion of the concrete type and a larger proportion of the more abstract type than did the younger children. One line of growth, then, clearly discernible in written expression of children is toward greater generality of meaning in substantive ideas. It is significant that some use of the highest types of meanings was made by the children of the third grade. The course of development, therefore, in the aspect of mental life under consideration, is change in degree, not in kind. By the time children have attained ability to express their ideas in writing they have already extended generalization in at least a few experiences to a high degree. The avenue of escape from the limitations of thinking in individual, particular, and concrete terms is already open to the broader applications of generalized meanings.



A final phase of growth in written expression may be mentioned. The decline in ego-centrism from third grade to sixth proved to be very interesting. The subject of the initial sentences in one series of papers was the pronoun *I* in more than 55 per cent of the compositions written by third grade pupils. In the sixth grade the corresponding percentage was less than twenty-five. That is, the assertion of the ego in the initial sentence of the composition declined from third grade to sixth from 55 per cent to 25 per cent. By inference, of course, this indicated decline in ego-centrism means an increase in impersonality in thinking as children progress through the grades of the elementary school.

The principal thesis which the results of the present study suggest is that the analysis of children's compositions may be made to yield significant facts and implications which supply promising suggestions for the formulation of a systematic course of instruction in written language. The guiding principle on which the suggestions of the succeeding sections of this paper are based, is that by anticipating the specific steps in the course of language development, systematic instruction in the understanding and use of those forms and usages required at each stage of growth can contribute to mental efficiency by keeping the development of the instrument of expression abreast of the requirements for expression.

If the hypothesis advanced in the preceding paragraph is valid, it would appear that there is a peculiar function in language training for the elementary school to perform. That function would be to anticipate the course of development in the use of language which will aid, at least not impede, the child in his thought. When the exact nature of the development of language ability is known, the forms peculiar to each stage can be placed sufficiently early in the

school course to reduce appreciably, if not remove entirely, the intellectual handicap of a language instrument which is inferior to the function it is required to perform.

Reference to the instrument of language is not intended to imply that language is an objective tool used by the mind as a hammer is used by the hand. The relationship is conceived to be considerably more intimate, more nearly analagous to the skill which may be used by the hand in operating a mechanical tool. The relationship, therefore, is interacting; The use of language clarifies thought; thinking refines, qualifies, elaborates expression.

On the basis of the results of the investigation being reported, a few suggestions may be offered for the formulation of the program of instruction.

The dominance of the self in the thinking of the very young writer was clearly indicated in the paragraph on ego-centrism. The decline of the ego in relation to the frequency of use of other subjects of thought was demonstrated to be very rapid between the third and sixth grades. Assuming the desirability of cultivating the wider range of interests, it seems clearly evident that the tendency in the child's thinking toward greater emphasis on other persons, things, places, actions and events, that is, a greater objective outlook in general, should be cultivated as extensively as possible. The obvious implication of the apparent desirability for stimulating objective thinking is that abundant opportunity must be provided for children to do thinking and to express their thoughts about meaningful, impersonal subjects. That is, the subject matter for language training is the subject matter for general intellectual training, the so-called content subjects: literature, history, geography, and natural science. There are of course abundant reasons for including also experience in writing personal letters and

in relating incidents with whatever degree of embellishment the writer's imagination may suggest.

The second bit of evidence bearing upon the general vocabulary development is the evidence that children during the last three years of the elementary school period incorporate in their written expression a significantly increasing proportion of nouns possessing the higher degrees of generality of meaning. This fact parallels in significance the broadening range of interests and subjects of thought pointed out in the preceding paragraph in connection with the decline of ego-centrism. Since the course of development is markedly in the direction of expanding generality of meanings, it should be expected that the school would provide every opportunity and stimulation for facilitating that development. By implication experiences in both reading and writing which genuinely tax the child's vocabulary should be provided.

It is clear from evidence already presented that considerable development may be expected in the elementary school grades in control over gross elements of sentence form. Form of course is important only because of its relation to meaning, but highly involved and qualified relationships of meanings can be conceived and used only by employing correspondingly elaborated forms of expression. Facility and efficiency in thinking require a sufficiently matured instrument of formulation and expression to avoid confusion, distraction, inhibition, and waste of mental energy.

The program of training implied by the foregoing statements involves understanding the function of modifiers and practice in their use. It is, of course, not to be expected that young children

will be extensively schooled in the niceties of grammar but that they shall recognize clearly the functions performed by word and phrase modifiers and have abundant opportunity to use them.

It would seem to be entirely desirable to eliminate the monotonous repetitions classified as persistence of form and to encourage variety in forms of expression. The two psychological values to be sought in variety of expression are discrimination of fine shades of meaning and emphasis. Particular examples of opportunities to facilitate growth in language ability are the use of inverted order and divided quotations. Since the course of development is toward a greater use of inverted order and divided quotations, the desirability of stimulating children to use them more extensively seems evident.

A striking opportunity for improving the language instrument is afforded in all instances of misplaced modifiers. As previously pointed out, word, phrase, and clause modifiers were misplaced in the writing of all grades from third to sixth inclusive. Exercises in comparing the meaning of statements with modifiers in various positions in the sentence should cultivate critical appreciation of the function of modifiers and the significance of their position in relation to the words they modify.

Proficiency in the use of language is not an attainment which just happens, nor is proficiency in thinking an achievement unaffected by language ability. Thinking and the use of language are two intimately related aspects of human behavior. Both deserve major emphasis in the school program: the former in its own right, the latter as an indispensable instrument in carrying on the higher forms of thinking.

# Stimulating Thought and Desire for Composition

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TO MAKE free expression over into real communication in the class room," was one of the late Dr. S. A. Leonard's most popular phrases, because the teachers under his instruction realized its truth as an ultimate goal in all composition teaching. In fact, one can not study the history of language without feeling the importance of man's desire to communicate with his fellow beings; and since all communication involves at least two persons, and therefore a social aspect, surely the class room is a suitable and natural place for cultivating "free expression for real communication."

Three years ago a group of teachers under the direction of Dr. S. A. Leonard at the University of Wisconsin attempted to build up a course of study in composition that would appeal to the interests of young people and that would have as its central philosophy "composition as a social problem."<sup>1</sup> The members of the group were led to inquire first into the immediate aims of all composition courses. After delving into texts of all descriptions and articles in numerous educational journals, they classified their findings, reducing them finally to the following five specific aims that might be found practical for any teacher of English in the grammar grades, junior high school, senior high school, or even the college:

To stimulate the thought of the student and his desire for communication by utilizing his experiences.

To discover individual interests and needs in composition.

To teach careful organization of ideas.

<sup>1</sup> Composition as a Social Problem—S. A. Leonard.

To establish social standards of judgment in matters of content and form.

To encourage the daily use of an effective and active vocabulary.

This paper is concerned with the first of these aims, the stimulation of thought and a desire for communication, easily stated, but not so easily attained. Perhaps two of the most important means to this noble end are first, overcoming the natural antagonism to themes and theme writing, and second, providing a variety of types of composition best adapted to the needs and interests of the student.

## *Overcoming Natural Antagonism to Composition*

Perhaps not all students would frankly define a theme as "a form of thought or expression invented by the evil one" but most pupils, when questioned seriously, admit their antagonism to the very word composition. This state of mind is natural. Throughout the school course a composition has usually meant an arduous task arbitrarily assigned by an English teacher, whose red pencil wrought havoc with even the neatest of papers. It is essential then at the very outset to remove prejudices hindering the coöperation of pupils and teacher. A desire for free expression and communication will likely have the rightful place as the chief concern of the group if the following ideas are impressed upon the pupils:

A. The English class is a social group or meeting place for the exchange of ideas.

B. Composition is merely the putting together of ideas "according to rec-



ognized standards of form" acceptable to others.

C. The organizing of material and its arrangement in sentences and paragraphs are necessary for making ideas clear to others.

D. Manifest weaknesses in certain established forms—spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and good usage—detract from the effectiveness of expression and should be eliminated as quickly as possible.

E. Any subject in which the pupil is interested will be of interest to the teacher.

F. The most interesting subjects are frequently the most commonplace.

G. All oral and written English aims to entertain or to inform; therefore it is necessary for the pupil to interest other members of the class in whatever he says or writes.

H. Any supplementary reading in books or magazines is not an arbitrary assignment for the proverbial book report, but is a valuable means of enriching experience, and knowing what is going on in the world.

I. The teacher of composition is a human being genuinely interested in the humblest efforts and sympathetic at all times.

*Types of Composition Best Adapted to Young People.*

A. Letter Writing

All letters in English class should be real letters treating of actual affairs. The writing of business letters during the class, or outside, is very easy to direct because of the impersonal nature of the contents. The friendly letter requires more thought of sincerity of expression is desired.

One writer suggests that the friendly letter may become an effective means of developing frank expression in the first days of the course. Interesting letters of note may be discussed to find out the qualities of their charm. Mrs. Helene Magee believes that letters to

relatives may be used profitably. If the children's self consciousness in revealing private affairs can be overcome, a sympathetic teacher may have success in encouraging them to make their family letters a part of the composition course.

1. Business letters.

- (a) To a high school principal, asking for information.
- (b) To a publisher or department store, ordering a book or merchandise.
- (c) To a manager of an athletic team, making arrangements for a game.
- (d) To a captain or coach of a debating team, making arrangements for a debate.
- (e) To a costumer, ordering costumes for a play.
- (f) To a man, requesting him to act as judge at a contest or debate.
- (g) To an employer, applying for a position.
- (h) To a store, making a complaint.
- (i) To a manufacturer, answering an advertisement.
- (j) To a publisher, subscribing or resubscribing for a magazine.

2. Friendly Letters of a Practical Nature.

- (a) An invitation to a friend for a visit.
- (b) A letter of appreciation following a visit.
- (c) A letter telling a friend how to reach the home of the hostess.
- (d) A letter of thanks for a gift.
- (e) A letter of condolence.
- (f) A letter of congratulation.
- (g) A letter to a sick friend.

B. Diary or Journal.

Some teachers have suggested the journal as an interesting means of expression in both the grades and high school. To be practical, it should be a record of

<sup>2</sup> "On the Value of Journal and Letter Writing as an Introduction to a Freshman Course in Exposition Writing"—Mrs. Helene Magee—*English Journal*, Sept. 1919.

events that take place during the first weeks, when the student is eager to report an accurate account of school news. Such a journal may become more personal as the days pass, but it should not be compulsory for anyone. It is merely given here as a device providing daily practice in writing interesting occurrences.

In the intermediate grades the diary may be a very vital part of the children's composition exercises. An experiment in the use of the diary for sentence building and vocabulary was conducted in the fifth grade in the Clarion Training School. Definite results were achieved by the end of the year because daily practice had been provided in the writing of two and three sentence compositions based upon the children's daily experiences. Both the teacher and the children could see the progress from day to day and therefore found real interest in the project.<sup>3</sup>

#### C. Expository Writing.

No matter what theories teachers may have regarding the four forms of discourse, they all regard the art of explanation as a most desirable attainment. Time can be spent profitably in the examination of models both before and after the presentation of the student's work. In this form of assignment the careful planning of ideas and desire to inform the audience should be the chief concern of the student. "To begin where the audience is"<sup>4</sup> and to take them step by step through the explanation should be his aim, for clearness is the essential of explanation.

#### *Subjects Adapted to Exposition from Which Children Make Their Choices*

1. Explanation of a process
  - (a) What I am expert at doing.
  - (b) How I made a bird house.
  - (c) Setting the table for a company

<sup>3</sup> An Experiment with a Diary in the Fifth Grade—Bertha V. Nair—*Elementary English Review*, September, 1928.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. S. A. Leonard's oft-repeated and timely phrase.

dinner.

- (d) Painting our porch furniture.
    - (e) Directions for playing a new game.
  2. Explanation of a literary allusion, or historical reference.
    - (a) To meet one's Waterloo.
    - (b) Elysian Fields.
    - (c) Sour grapes.
    - (d) Dog in the manger.
    - (e) Herculean task.
  3. The explanation of a proverb with an illustration or application.
    - (a) Birds of a feather flock together.
    - (b) A rolling stone gathers no moss.
    - (c) A stitch in time saves nine.
    - (d) He who will not bend must break.
    - (e) Slow and steady wins the race.
  4. The explanation of favorite verses or stanzas of poetry.
    - (a) A practical lesson in "The Village Blacksmith."
    - (b) The message of "Trees" to me.
    - (c) The most impressive lines in "The Vision of Sir Launfal."
    - (d) Family life in "Snow Bound."
- #### D. Brief Narratives or Interesting Experiences.

Much has been said in class regarding the choice of subjects for narratives and the necessity of limiting them. If we accept Mr. Sheridan's description<sup>5</sup> of a good subject as personal, definite, and brief, the teacher of English has a real task in getting pupils to tell a story well. If only a paragraph or two are to be written and only two minutes are allowed for the story, naturally the child will have to start in the middle of things and finish as quickly as possible. There is not time for a long introduction if the laws of emphasis are to be observed.

It is unnecessary to give suggestive subjects here because they are too numerous and too varied to list. It is enough

<sup>5</sup> R. M. Sheridan—*Speaking and Writing English*.

to say that short stories, anecdotes, jokes and interesting experiences of all kinds, should be welcomed in the composition class as an important form for either oral or written English.

#### E. Contributions to the School Paper

Teachers of composition have frequently been so successful in using the school paper for the motivation of writing that they have formally organized the class as a journalism club or newspaper staff. The practicability of this plan is questionable, but we can all accept the newspaper as one of the means of vitalizing written exercises.

#### *Unit on Journalistic Writing for Use in the Grades*

##### Subjects for Discussion.

1. Definition of news.
2. What makes news interesting?
3. The chief classifications of news appealing to the American public.
4. Sources of news.
5. Form, length, and style of news articles.
6. Chief types of news articles.
  - (a) News story
  - (b) Feature story
  - (c) Interview
  - (d) Human interest story
  - (e) Editorial
7. Duties of the editorial staff.
8. Some great editors and the papers for which they write.
9. The organization of a school paper.
10. The publication of a school paper.

#### F. Oral English in Daily Life.

Certain types of oral English may be suitably called composition in daily life. Pupils like the term and are eager to help the teacher decide upon the topics for this unit. From the students at Clarion Teachers College the teacher was able to elicit the following subjects of general interest:

1. The after dinner speech.
  - (a) At a class banquet.
  - (b) At a meeting of Boy Scouts, Girl Reserves, or similar organization.

(c) At a football banquet.

(d) At a dinner given in honor of some distinguished man or school visitor.

#### 2. Brief speeches of a miscellaneous character.

(a) A speech of introduction.

(b) The presentation of a gift.

(c) Introductory remarks of the officer presiding at a debate.

(d) An address of some assigned topic for a literary society or club.

(e) An address of welcome to the parents on the annual Parents' Day.

(f) Opinions on current topics used for auditorium programs.

#### 3. Conversation of an informal nature necessary in daily life.

(a) Telephone conversation with laundress, cleaning woman, station agent, grocer.

(b) Proper and courteous words of address in speaking to a servant in the home, an agent at the door, clerks in a store, the grocer, the waitress in a restaurant or hotel.

(c) Dinner table conversation.

Note: Books of etiquette were placed on reference shelf while these subjects were being discussed in class.

#### G. The Symposium<sup>1</sup> and Informal Argument on Subjects Related to School Life.

1. We should have Monday as a school holiday.

2. School should be dismissed every day at two o'clock.

3. Our school needs a swimming pool.

4. There should be a school party every Friday night.

#### H. Magazines and Supplementary Reading.

One hesitates to mention books and magazines because of the controversy about book reports. However, literature in the composition class, not only

<sup>1</sup> Teaching Oral English—Emma Bolenius.



# A Critical Summary of Selective Research

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**D**URING the Washington meeting of the National Education Association a group of persons interested in improving English instruction in the elementary school by means of research held a series of conferences. As a result of the deliberations of this group three things were accomplished: (a) an organization was formed called The National Conference on Research in Elementary School English which would meet annually at the time and place of the winter convention of the Department of Superintendence, (b) committees were appointed to study certain problems, and (c) a program was arranged for the next conference meeting. The main feature of the program of the Second Annual Conference at Minneapolis in February, 1933 was the presentation and discussion of Dr. Greene's bulletin entitled "Research in Elementary Language: A Report on Problems and Progress." This report outlined under five major divisions the extensive research program in elementary school English which is being conducted at the University of Iowa.

At the time of the Minneapolis Conference it was decided that the Committee on Research Bibliography should prepare a critical summary of research within the field of elementary school English to be presented at the Third Annual Conference. The summary was to be limited to research in language, grammar and composition; hence, investigations in spelling and handwriting were not to be included. In preparing this summary the Committee was confronted with several problems. One problem was concerned with the establishment of criteria for se-

lecting the most important research in the field. This problem was rendered all the more acute because the conditions of publication required that the summary be limited to 20,000 words. In order to set up criteria, an attempt was made to canvass the judgment of research workers in the field of English as to what constitute defensible standards for the evaluation of research materials. From the large number of contributing responses that were received those criteria were selected which were most frequently and most unqualifiedly mentioned by the research experts whose judgment was sought. The criteria that were finally accepted for appraising the available and pertinent research are listed below.

1. The research should be definitely related to some critical or crucial problem.
2. The problem under investigation should be clearly conceived and definitely limited.
3. The research should give evidence of an adequately conceived method for obtaining objective data.
4. The data obtained should represent a sampling adequate enough to show trends or tendencies.
5. All factors or elements which might influence the research findings should be definitely isolated.
6. Pupil products resulting from experimentation should be produced under controlled conditions.
7. The techniques used for treating the data must be adequate in nature and statistically sound.
8. The research findings should be sensibly and conservatively interpreted.

The matter of discovering and assembling the research that had been undertaken constituted a second problem with which the Committee had to deal. An attempt was made to locate the research material by making a thorough canvass of the literature and by extensive correspondence with research workers in public schools and higher educational institutions. Some of the research had been reported in published form in journals and bulletins; much of it, however, was in unpublished form and filed in college and university libraries. In many instances these unpublished reports were borrowed from the college and university libraries; in other instances, qualified members of the institutional staff were prevailed upon to abstract the reports according to specifications suggested by the Committee.

A third problem which confronted the Committee had to do with the particular items to be included in the research abstracts. As a result of conferences and discussion, it was decided that the abstracts should include the following items: (a) investigator's name, together with certain related items—e.g., date of investigation; by whom directed; under whose auspices conducted; status of research, whether master's or doctor's research, independent study, or seminar paper; publication data, including dates, publisher, and place of publication, or, if unpublished, where filed; (b) exact title of study, including interpretation if needed for clearness; (c) character of research—e.g., experimental, analytical, statistical; (d) limitations of study—e.g., number of cases, character of pupil population, grade level, chronological ages, etc.; (e) procedures utilized in collecting and handling data; (f) specific findings and conclusions; and (g) implications.

After a great deal of time and energy had been expended, the abstracts were made available in the form in which they appear in this bulletin. Long before the work was completed, the members of the Committee became keenly aware of cer-

tain disturbing facts. One fact was that comparatively little research had been undertaken which was pertinently related to the improvement of English teaching; furthermore, most of the research that was available was concerned with problems related to the teaching of English in secondary schools. A second fact which disturbed the Committee was concerned with the character of the research. The great majority of investigations which have been reported deal with the mechanical phases of English composition to the neglect of organization of ideas and originality of expression. Not since the work of Colvin in 1902 and that of Colvin and Meyer in 1906 has there been a thorough-going investigation of imaginative elements in expression. Moreover, there is a great paucity of the type of research that even remotely attempts to investigate the possibilities of developing creativeness and general excellence in expression. A third disquieting fact had to do with the limitations and shortcomings of the research that was available. All too often a particular investigation would reveal one or more of the following deficiencies:

1. Investigation did not deal with a critical or crucial problem.
2. Problem was not clearly stated or definitely limited.
3. Investigation did not utilize a control group.
4. Same form of test was used for initial and final measurement.
5. Source of original data (e.g., courses of study) was open to question.
6. Pupils included in an investigation often represented a select or limited group.
7. Sampling of data was not adequate enough or representative enough to yield significant results.
8. The error-quotient technique was not employed in computing gains resulting from the use of a particular technique of teaching or of administration.
9. Type of measurement (e.g.,

teacher-judgment) used for evaluation of results was unsound or did not lend itself readily to statistical procedures for determining the reliability of the measurement.

10. No attempt was made to measure either the permanency of the learning resulting from the use of a particular teaching technique or the extent to which the training transferred to situations outside the English class-room.

11. Unsatisfactory criteria (e.g., pupil-reactions on formal tests versus pupil-reactions in free-writing situations) were employed as standards to determine improvement resulting from the use of teaching and administrative techniques.

12. Factors which may have influenced the results of teaching (e.g., teacher-personality, level of pupil-maturity, pupil-readiness for learning, pressures operating outside the class-room, etc.) were either

not carefully controlled or altogether ignored.

Attention has been called in the preceding paragraphs to the dearth of valid research in English teaching, particularly in the elementary school, and to the limited scope of the problems which were subjected to study. In order to stimulate more research of a vital sort in the teaching of elementary school English the list of problems submitted at the end of this bulletin was assembled. The list was prepared from problems submitted by members of our National Conference and other interested persons. The name of the individual who submitted the problem appears in parentheses after the statement of the problem. It is hoped that this exhibit of problems, which in the judgment of experts are considered to be in urgent need of investigation, will act as stimulus to further research effort.

W. S. Guiler.

#### A CRITICAL SURVEY OF SELECTIVE RESEARCH

**Betts, Emmett A.**, "An Experimental Appraisal of Certain Techniques for the Study of Oral Composition." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa. Directed by Harry A. Greene, June, 1931. Published by University of Iowa, *Studies in Education*.

*Character of Research.* Experimental.

*Problem.* 1. The development and experimental evaluation of an economical and dependable instrument for the electric recording of the oral activities of pupils under experimental and classroom conditions. 2. The appraisal of five techniques—court reporting, shorthand reporting, longhand reporting, phonetic transcribing, and electric recording—as instruments for use in the study of oral language activities.

*Limitations of Study.* 1. For the purposes of this investigation, 86 pupils in grades four, five, and six were used. 2. The study offers no analysis of the effect of reporter's errors and omissions on frequency counts of errors in children's speech. 3. No analysis was made of the mispronunciation of words by the pupils. 4. No appraisal was made of Stenotype reports. 5. No evidence was secured relative to the necessity of securing a continuous report of oral language activities.

*Procedure.* 1. An apparatus for the electric recording of oral language activities was developed. (The complete description of the machine may be found in Volume I of the thesis which is filed in the Education Library of the University of Iowa). 2. Twenty-one reporters were carefully selected: (a) three certified court reporters, (b) nine shorthand reporters, (c) six longhand reporters, and (d) three phoneticians. 3. At different times two films were shown to the pupils who participated. After each showing, the pupils were requested to tell the investigator the story. The oral composition of each pupil was recorded electrically and by the reporters. 138,715 words were recorded by means of the five techniques. 4. An analysis was made of the comparative accuracy of the five methods of recording. 5. The rate of the oral compositions were determined from the electrically made records.

*Specific Findings and Conclusions.* 1. In the situation created for the purpose of this investigation, the electrical recording apparatus proved to be superior to the court reporters, shorthand reports, longhand reporters, and phoneticians. 2. When compared with the other four techniques of the type used in this study, electric recording



has five advantages: (a) the record may be proof-read in situations where a high degree of recording accuracy is required in the report; (b) the presence of a reporter in the situation is eliminated. The microphone may be hidden if the situation requires it; (c) the rate for the production of speech sounds may be easily determined; (d) a more nearly accurate and complete report of the oral language activities in a given situation may be secured; (e) since the meaning of oral language is determined, in part, by the inflection of the voice, the electric recording is a valuable supplement to the written transcript. 3. The type of electric recording used in this study has two chief disadvantages: (a) the intelligibility of the record is modified by the acoustical properties of the room in which the oral language activities take place; (b) the various types of voices cannot be recorded equally well. 4. Electric recording may be expected to be about 99 per cent accurate. 5. A court reporter's record of oral language activities of pupils in grades four, five, and six, can be expected to be 85 per cent accurate but only about 80 per cent of *total* oral language activities in a controlled situation can be recorded. Court reporters succeed in securing a good description of what takes place by the clever substitution and addition of words to the record. 6. A selected shorthand reporter's record is about 83 per cent accurate. About 53 per cent of the total oral language activities can be accurately recorded by this type of reporter. 7. A selected longhand reporter's record is as accurate as either a court reporter's or a shorthand reporter's; however, the longhand reporters got less of the total oral language, accurately recording only 32 per cent of the total number of words used by the pupils. 8. A phonetic transcript is more nearly accurate than the court reporters', shorthand reporters', or longhand reporters' records, but only 14.9 per cent of the total number of words were accurately recorded. The number of substituted, added, and transposed words constituted 12.3 per cent of the phonetic transcriptions. 9. The use of a controlled situation, such as the one described here, appears to be a desirable means of securing information relative to the language usage of individuals at other grade levels. 10. For case study research the electric recording apparatus is the most economical and accurate method of recording the oral language activities. For this study the operating cost of the machine and the cost of transcribing the records averaged 75 cents per one thousand words.

**Betts, Emmett A.**, "Style Books as Sources of Information for Teachers." *The Elementary English Review*, Volume X, Number 9 (November, 1933).

*Character of Research.* Survey of style manuals used by publishers of school textbooks.

*Problem.* To determine what style manuals are used in the editorial departments of textbook publishers.

*Limitations of Study.* 1. Twenty-nine editors cooperated. 2. Manuals adopted for both exclusive and supplementary use were included. 3. No controlled analysis of the content of the manuals mentioned was made.

*Procedure.* 1. The editorial departments of 29 publishers of public school textbooks were requested to indicate the specific style manuals used in their work. All of the publishers replied. 2. For each of the 15 style manuals reported, the number of mentions for exclusive use and for supplementary use was tabulated.

*Specific Findings and Conclusions.* 1. Twenty-five publishers indicated the use of 15 style manuals; four reported no style manual was used. 2. Sixteen companies reported the use of *A Manual of Style* published by the University of Chicago Press. Eleven used it exclusively for matters of style; five used it as a supplementary reference. 3. Five companies reported five other manuals for exclusive use.

*Implications.* The six style manuals, reported as being used exclusively by the publishers of our textbooks, should provide a reliable index of one phase of current usage.

**Betzner, Jean**, "Content and Form of Original Compositions Dictated by Children from Five to Eight Years of Age." *Contributions to Education*. Number 442. Teachers College, Columbia University.

*Character of Research.* Analysis of compositions dictated by children.

*Problem.* 1. To determine what situation will stimulate a story response. 2. To survey the children's concepts of a story. 3. To study the form of the dictated story. 4. To determine if there is a significant difference between boys and girls in these concepts and forms. 5. To compare dictated stories with models of original stories found in textbooks. 6. To compare dictated stories with recommendations and suggestions offered in recent courses of study and books on method.

*Limitations of Study.* 1. The stories were recorded in longhand by thirteen people unknown to the pupils. 2. The pupils were given no sug-

gestions as to subject matter. 3. The pupils had practically no time for preparation. 4. The composition was read back to the child as many times as the child asked for it during the dictation. 5. Dictated stories were secured only from those children who volunteered. 6. 1,215 children's dictated compositions were secured in 66 kindergarten, first, second, and third grade classrooms. 7. An attempt was made to study a school population representative of the United States.

*Procedure.* 1. The content of the dictated compositions was analyzed for each sex of the five, six, seven and eight year old levels, for (a) main idea of the compositions; (b) kind of story in terms of main character or events; (c) subject matter of compositions; and (d) relationships of character and of events. 2. The form of the dictated compositions was analyzed for each sex on the five, six, seven, and eight year old levels for (a) length of composition; (b) items in organization; (c) characterization; (d) conversation; (e) use of unusual phrases and interesting names; and (f) use of terms expressing motor and sense impressions. 3. Three general criteria of present practice in relation to content and study were analyzed: (a) twelve textbooks in English, published since 1923; (b) ten courses of study, published since 1923, and rated as "very good" or "above" by Stratmeyer and Brunner; and (c) ten books dealing with methods of teaching English, written by specialists in this field since 1923.

*Specific Findings and Conclusions.* 1. A situation in which pupils are permitted to dictate to a stranger and receive typewritten copies of their stories proved adequate for the purposes of the study. 2. The content was characterized by variety. They were largely realistic narratives about actual experiences. Little use was made of experiences obtained from literature. 3. The compositions varied in length from nine to 1,074 words, with a median length of 66.6 words. The median number of units of thought per composition was 7.25. Most of the compositions were given titles. More eight year olds than five year olds used repetitions. The larger percentage of the compositions had conclusive endings. 4. Duplication of theme, use of animals as main characters, realistic treatment of theme, use of unconnected episodes, violation of time sequence, and inconclusive endings decreased with the increase of age. 5. The boys were less realistic, more imaginative, and tended to associate wrong-doing with punishment more than the girls did. 6. The survey of present

practice indicates "more attention to the reproduction of the ideas and patterns of others than to the guidance in handling original themes and self-chosen patterns."

**Bontrager, O. B.** "An Experimental Appraisal of Pupil Control of Certain Items of Punctuation." Ph. D. Dissertation. College of Education, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa. Directed by Dr. Harry A. Greene, August, 1933. Unpublished. Filed in Education Library.

*Character of Research.* 1. An analysis of the rules of punctuation in seven manuals of style, and (2) an appraisal of pupil control of certain items frequently used in the writing of letters.

*Problem.* 1. To present a detailed analysis of the punctuation rules and illustrations supporting the rules found in seven manuals of style. (a) To determine a technical vocabulary of the rules of punctuation. (b) To determine a list of main ideas involved in the statements of the rules. (c) To discover the grammatical variations that are included in the application of each of the various rules. 2. To appraise, by studying responses to 44 items in test situations, certain factors of pupil control. (a) To determine, in terms of test performance, the relative difficulty of the items. (b) To determine the persistence of error for each of the items. (c) To determine whether there are apparent differences in difficulty in variations covered by the same rule. (d) To discover the status of teaching practice with respect to these items.

*Limitations of Study.* 1. The analyses made are a measure of the ability of one individual to interpret and analyze. 2. The type of measurement used does not lend itself readily to statistical procedures for determining the reliability of measurement. 3. One cannot be sure that the differences found are due to the innate difficulty of the items, the result of learning, or weaknesses in the test items themselves. 4. There is no guarantee that the tests are valid.

*Procedure.* 1. Tabulations were made of the technical vocabulary, main ideas, and variations covered by each rule in the punctuation rules of seven manuals of style. 2. The data for the second part of the study consisted of test reactions from 553 pupils in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 with I. Q.'s ranging from 90 to 110 as measured by standard intelligence tests. Sixteen Iowa school systems were involved.

Forty-four items of punctuation were incorporated in a series of business and friendly letters which were set up in the form of tests employing the error correction technique. Six distinct reactions were obtained from each pupil to each test item; two responses were obtained when the item was tested by using correct punctuation; two when the punctuation was omitted; and two when an improper substitution had been made. In addition, data were secured from teachers in these schools relative to practices that are being followed in teaching the items.

*Specific Findings and Conclusions.* 1. The results of the analysis include a technical vocabulary of 331 words, a list of 1,033 main ideas, and 484 grammatical variations. 2. On the basis of the tests used, 34 out of 44 of the items can be arranged in a scale of relative difficulty which remains fairly constant from grade to grade and from school to school. 3. In the case of three of the rules, significant differences were obtained between the percentages of correct responses to two or more variations covered by the same rule. 4. In the case of 14 items, teaching practices contrary to the opinion of a majority of the writers of the style manuals are indicated by one or more schools.

*Implications.* The large number of technical words and ideas involved in the statements of rules of punctuation emphasizes the importance of meaning factors which must rank high among the determinants of achievement. The varying degrees of difficulty of variations covered by the same rule indicate the futility of expecting mastery as a result of teaching general principles.

**Brueckner, L. J.**, (University of Minnesota), **Cutright, Prudence** (Public Schools, Minneapolis, Minnesota), "Dictation in Teaching Punctuation" (A study to determine its effectiveness.) *The Elementary English Review*, Volume IV, Number 9 (November, 1927), pp. 265-69.

*Character of Research.* Experimental testing.

*Problem.* To discover whether the systematic use of dictation exercises improves the ability of

fourth-grade pupils to use selected punctuation marks.

*Limitations of Study.* 1. Scope: (a) Field too narrow; (b) number of cases inadequate. 2. Omission of direct teaching of punctuation in the control group minimizes the significance of the study.

*Procedure.* 1. The comma, apostrophe, and quotation marks (which show a high frequency of error in usage) were chosen for the experiment. As a further limitation, three cases only of each of these marks of punctuation were selected for the testing. Three sets of dictation exercises utilizing these nine usages were developed, each part stressing three usages and sufficing for one of the three one-week teaching periods. 2. Three methods of teaching were developed for the experimental groups: (a) Dictate—only method (teacher dictates, collects papers without comment); (b) dictate—correct method (teacher dictates, pupils correct papers); and (c) study—dictate—correct method (teacher-directed study period, dictation, correction by pupils). 3. To eliminate the factor of previous training, four fourth-grade groups were chosen for the experiment. The dictation exercises were given daily in three groups; the fourth group received the usual instruction in written composition without direct teaching of punctuation. 4. Initial and final tests were given all groups; and, after four weeks, a delayed-recall test. The same test was used in all three cases.

*Specific Findings and Conclusions.* 1. Results of final and delayed-recall tests show that the dictation groups greatly excelled the non-dictation group in ability to use the punctuation marks. 2. Similar results obtained in the case of groups of the same intelligence level, a significant fact.

*Implications.* It is evident that the ability of fourth-grade pupils to use punctuation marks is greatly improved by the systematic use of dictation exercises. It seems probable that similar experiments in other fields and with other groups would substantiate the thesis that dictation is effective in teaching.



# Fairy Tales as Folklore

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(Concluded from February)

**I**N HIS *Children's Stories and How to Tell Them*, Bone has said that fairy tales "so abound with life itself that they can never die of old age. They are shot through with magic and romance, and belong to the world in its youth." It would seem that this statement alone would justify the study of these immortal tales.

The story of "Little Red Riding Hood" is told by Perrault in his *Tales of Mother Goose* (*Contes de ma mere l'Oye*, published in 1697), and by Grimm under the title, "The Red Cap." A modern French author, Charles Marrelles, has written the story as a sunflower myth under the title, "True History of Little Golden Hood," while Miss Thackery, disapproving of the original story, attempted to modernize it in her "Red Riding Hood," published in the *Cornhill Magazine* November 2, 1867. Chronologically, the earliest form of this story is probably that found in an early Italian collection, *Pentameron*, which collection contains almost exactly the same stories as does Perrault's *Contes de ma mere l'Oye*.

From an allegorical viewpoint (which will probably not interest children in the least) Red Riding Hood may be interpreted as the evening sun, going to see her grandmother, the earth, who is the first to be swallowed by the wolf, night and darkness. The red cape and hood represent the twilight glow. In Grimm's version, the hunter may be compared to the rising sun which rescues all from the night.

The version we are using here is the one given by Perrault. It is chosen to illustrate, as it so admirably does, per-

fection in structure. This perfection in form is frequently found in these early folk tales, and may be noted in such tales as Grimm's "Briar Rose," Dasent's version of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," and Jacob's version of "Jack and the Beanstalk." But though this version of "Little Red Riding Hood" serves to illustrate the folk elements in traditional fairy tales, it is probably not the version we would choose to tell young children. We would prefer one with a less horrible ending. This point will be commented on again in the following analysis of the story.

## *Analysis of "Little Red Riding Hood"*

Once upon a time there lived in a certain village

Indefinite time and place is one of the main characteristics of fairy tales.

a little country girl, the prettiest creature that was ever seen.

Bone in *Children's Stories and How to Tell Them* says that simple descriptive words, such as good, bad, pretty, ugly, old, are the only ones used in fairy tales.

Her mother was exceedingly fond of her, and her grandmother doted on her still more.

While we read many peculiar instances of primitive peoples deserting, exposing, or sacrificing their children, these strange customs could nearly always be explained on economic or religious grounds, for these people were really passionately devoted to their off-spring.

There is no mention of Red Riding Hood's father in any of the versions of this story. This probably evidences a state of primitive society when woman held a place superior to that of man.

This woman got made for her a little red riding hood,

Gifts are very important in fairy tales and often are endowed with magic powers. In

Charles Marelles' version, the golden hood used is magic and saves Red Riding Hood's life by burning the wolf when he attempted to eat her.

which became the little girl so extremely well that everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood.

Note the use of an abstract name. In primitive times children were frequently named something that suggested some trait, or talent, or personal attribute. This may be due to the ancient belief that if one's real name were spoken, it would be heard by sorcerers and evil spirits, who would thereby gain a means of injuring the power of the name. (See Frazer: *The Golden Bough*, Chapter VIII.) A good illustration of this power of the knowledge of a name may be had in the story of "Rumpelstilkin", in which the discovery of the dwarf's name cost him his life and saved the Princess.

One day,

Still the indefiniteness of time, her mother, having made some custards, said to her, "Go, my dear, and see how thy grandmother does,

Early action is a requisite of the good fairy tale.

Bone brings out the fact that most fairy tales are concerned with a search, a command which is carried out, or a command that is disobeyed. Here we have a command carried out. Some versions make prominent the idea of Red Riding Hood's having disobeyed her mother's command not to loiter on the way. for I hear that she has been ill.

News of the illness was probably brought to the mother by travelers—this being the usual way of spreading news. Carry her a custard and this pot of butter."

The ancient custom of sending gifts to the sick still survives. Little Red Riding Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother's who lived in another village.

Contrast her obedience with the disobedience of Lazy Jack or of Jack in "Jack and the Beanstalk."

The distance to the other village was probably very short.

As she was going through the wood, she met Gaffer Wolf, who had a very

great mind to eat her up, but he durst not because of some fagot-makers hard by in the forest. He asked her whither she was going. The poor child did not know that it was dangerous to stay and hear a wolf talk, and she said to him, "I am going to see my grandmother and carry her a custard and a little pot of butter from my mamma." "Does she live far off?" said the wolf. "Oh, aye," answered little Red Riding Hood, "it is beyond the mill you see there at the first house in the village."

Primitive belief in animism taught that birds, beasts, and fish were endowed with powers of thought just as is man and even gave them powers of speech. Animals frequently appear in fairy tales, but unlike the cruel wolf of this tale, they are usually friendly and helpful.

The "surprise" element common to fairy tales is here illustrated in the chance meeting of Red Riding Hood and the wolf. "Well," said the wolf, "and I'll go to see her too. I'll go this way, and you go that, and we shall see who will be there soonest."

The wolf began to run as fast as he could, taking the nearest way, and the little girl went by the farthest, diverting herself by gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and making nosegays of such little flowers as she met with.

Red Riding Hood, according to Laura E. Kready in her *Study of Fairy Tales* is a romantic fairy tale, in which nature plays an important part. Here we have a picture of the little girl amusing herself among the flowers, and other simple beauties of nature. These familiar situations make a strong appeal to children.

Note the repetition of the sound *s*. Both Bone and Kready suggest that the teacher should see much of suggested help in the phonetic elements of the fairy tales.

The wolf was not long before he got to the old woman's house. He knocked at the door, "Tap, tap."

Note the use of the simple descriptive adjective, "old," and the repetition of the sound "tap." "Who's there?" "Y o u r grandchild,

Little Red Riding Hood," replied the wolf, counterfeiting her voice, "who has brought you a custard and a pot of butter sent you by Mamma."

The wolf uses the exact words spoken by Red Riding Hood.

The grandmother, who was in bed because she was somewhat ill, cried out, "Pull the bobbin and the latch will go up." The wolf pulled the bobbin and the door opened and then presently he fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment, for it was three days that he had not touched a bite.

Without even closing the door, the wolf ate the grandmother up. Simple and direct development of plot is characteristic of the tales.

And then he shut the door, and went into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding Hood, who came some time afterward, and knocked at the door, "Tap, tap." "Who's there?"

Indefinite time, repetition of the "tap, tap," and of the very words of the grandmother.

Little Red Riding Hood, hearing the big voice of the wolf

Forceful in its simplicity.

was at first afraid, but believing that her grandmother had got a cold and was hoarse, answered, "'Tis your grandchild, Red Riding Hood, who has brought you a custard and a little pot of butter Mamma sends you."

Repetition.

The wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much he could, "Pull the bobbin and the latch will go up." Little Red Riding Hood pulled the bobbin and the door opened. The wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bed clothes, "Put the custard and the little pot of butter upon the stool and come and lie down with me." Little Red Riding Hood went to the bed, where being greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her night clothes, she said to her,

Note the force added to this conversation by the repetition of the words in the questions and the answers. Note also the excellent de-

vice for reaching the climax—the mention, in the following order, of arms, legs, eyes, and finally teeth, which prepares for the climax.

"Grandmamma, what great arms you have got!" "The better to hug thee, my dear!"

"Grandmamma, what great legs you have got!" "That is to run the better my child."

"Grandmamma, what great ears you have got!" "That is to hear thee better, my child."

"Grandmamma, what great eyes you have got!" "It is to see thee better, my child."

"Grandmamma, what great teeth you have got!" "That is to eat thee up." And saying these words this wicked wolf fell upon Little Red Riding Hood and ate her all up.

Tragic end. Many versions of the story are so constructed as have "happy endings." In some versions the woodmen appear in the nick of time and save the grandmother. In others, both the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood are swallowed but are rescued from the "innards" of the wolf after the woodmen kill him. Many teachers do not approve of the use of this tragic ending with its hint of terror. Andrew Lang, an authority, certainly, on this type of story, contends that the tale in the version we have used in this analysis, is supposed to waken in the child terror and pity after the style of the old Greek stories.

As mentioned before, the allegorical interpretation of the story would be of little interest to children, but it should at least awaken in teachers the wonderful possibilities offered in these old tales for a further study of "the childhood of fiction."

The story of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" is the version used in Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse*. It has long been a favorite with children, largely because of its compactness and its strong cumulative force. One who studies the style of this typical folk tale will agree that a high standard of perfection has been reached.

It is an animal tale, similar in structure to that of "The Three Bears,"



which belongs to the same class of delightful repetitive tales, and in which the sequence of the plot is in the same three distinct steps. Clearness of idea and unity of plot are secured excellently.

*Analysis of "The Three Billy Goats Gruff"*

Once upon a time

The characteristic indefiniteness of time. McCullough in his *Childhood of Fiction* gives as the three essentials of the traditional fairy tale, (1) the anonymity of the characters, (2) no note of time or place, and (3) "a definite theme or plot, worked up to its definite conclusion."

there were three billy goats who were to go up to the hill to make themselves fat, and the name of all the three was "Gruff."

Here we have the recurrence of the magic number three. Note the simple precision shown in this first paragraph.

On the way up was a bridge, over a burn, they had to cross, and under the bridge lived an ugly troll, with eyes as big as saucers, and a nose as long as a poker.

There is emotional harmony displayed in the paragraph; the choice of words is admirable. Note "ugly troll," "eyes as big as saucers," and "nose as long as a poker." The use of such simple, telling figures of speech helps endear these tales to the child to whom the figures present real pictures. The troll in Norwegian tales is the counterpart of the orge in tales from more southern lands.

So, first of all, came the youngest Billy Goat Gruff to cross the bridge.

As explained previously, the youngest is a very important member of the family in the fairy tales, since in primitive times inheritance was through the youngest instead of the eldest child.

"Trip-trap, Trip-trap," went the bridge.

Note the repetition of words, which makes for emotional appeal. The bridge plays a rather important part in folk tales. It is frequently the habitation of a troll.

"Who's that tripping over my bridge?" roared the troll. "Oh, it is only I, the tiniest Billy Goat Gruff, and

I'm going up to the hillside to make myself fat," said the billy goat in such a small voice.

Note the sincerity of the little Billy Goat Gruff.

"Now I'm coming to gobble you up!" said the troll. "Oh, no! Pray don't take *me*. I'm too little—that I am," said the billy goat. "Wait a bit until the second Billy Goat Gruff comes. He's much bigger."

Note the energy and force in the words of the tiny billy goat to the troll.

"Well, be off with you," said the troll.

Action implied. The quick action in these tales is always appealing to children.

A little while after, came the second Billy Goat Gruff to cross the bridge. "Trip-trap-trip. Trip-trap-trip," went the bridge.

The unity and simplicity of the story is evident. There are no confusing details. Repetition of the "Trip-trap," is forceful.

"Who's that tripping over my bridge?" roared the troll. "Oh, it's the second Billy Goat Gruff and I'm going up to the hillside to make myself fat," said the billy goat who hadn't a small voice.

Natural, unaffected progression of the story toward its climax.

"Now I'm coming to gobble you up!" said the troll, "Oh, no! Don't take *me*. Wait till the big Billy Goat Gruff comes. He's much bigger."

A touch of humor. The contrast suggested in the differences in the voices of the three billy goats reminds one of the voices of the three bears—an element in that lovely story dear to the hearts of childish listeners.

But just then up came the big Billy Goat Gruff!

Excellent coherence is secured through the cumulative presentation of the story. The relation of the parts is so evident that we are always prepared for the next step in the unfolding of the plot.

"Trip-Trap-trip. Trip-trap-trip," went the bridge, for the third Billy Goat Gruff was so heavy that the bridge creaked and groaned under him.

With the third "Trip-trap" across the bridge, something is bound to happen. One feels the potency of the "third time"—the charm of the action that it must inevitably bring.

"Who that tramping over my bridge?" roared the troll. "It's I, the big Billy Goat Gruff!" said the billy goat who had an ugly hoarse voice.

Note the quality of the voice.

"Now I'm coming to gobble you up!" roared the troll.

The third threat.

"Well, come along!

"I've got two spears,

And I'll poke your eyeballs  
Out at your ears.

And I've got, besides  
Two curling stones.

And I'll crush you to bits,  
Body and bones."

Common occurrence of more or less humor-

ous rhymes, or charms, which seem to have magic power in fairy tales. Compare with the "Fee, fi, fo, fum" rhyme in "Jack, the Giant Killer."

That was what the big billy goat said! And so he flew at the troll and poked his eyes out with his horns, and crushed him to bits—body and bones, and tossed him into the burn. And after that he went up the hillside.

The climax of the story is reached when the big billy goat calls the bluff—if it were a bluff—of the troll.

There, the billy goats got so fat they were scarcely able to walk home again; and if the fat hasn't fallen off them, why they're still fat, and so—

Snip, snap, snout,

The tale's told out.

The usual happy ending. The nonsense jingle here used is typical of the opening or closing of many fairy tales.

## STIMULATING THOUGHT AND DESIRE FOR COMPOSITION

(Continued from page 74)

provides interesting models from time to time, but often stimulates thought in a very vital way. Even such an out-and-out radical as Dr. S. A. Leonard admitted in his class that books may serve composition needs provided "the teacher insists that more than one book be used as a basis of the child's opinion or information."

In the upper grades it is practicable to divide the class into groups for the study of various topics suggested by periodicals. Each pupil may choose the subject that interests him most among these headings: politics, sociology, economics, literature, nature study, home economics, exploration, invention, and so on.

When several articles on one topic have been read, the pupils are ready to

choose theme topics suggested by their reading. The teacher insists that the statements be framed in such a way that the children will be forced to express their own opinions. For example, if the articles read by one pupil have centered about the establishment of new air-routes, he should select only one idea and proceed to prove or disprove it, substantiating his opinions from his reading. He is urged to cite illustrations when discussing any abstract subject.

Such a use of magazines stimulates the child's thought by opening up to him the popular subjects before the American people today. The work, if properly directed, will awaken a keener interest in world affairs and a desire to express opinions in group discussion.

## CHANGING SENTENCE STRUCTURE OF CHILDREN

(Continued from page 65)

idea is what he started out to explain. When the teacher says that the sentence about the grass is incomplete, he cannot prove it except by an abstract discussion of finite verbs. It is complete enough for the pupil. A thing is complete to a child when he has done all that he wants to, with it. But when the sentence about the shovel is discussed, the pupil has an experience, a shovel, if you will, against which to check what he has said.

It does not require a mathematician to explain to us that the most fascinating thing in the world is relation. Rightly understood, the process of learning is largely the process of acquiring relationships. As the child learns, therefore, he must constantly be aware of relation. If he writes about the matters which are vivid experiences to him, he is certain to have a demand for sentences which clarify relationships. We can consequently expect abundant use of dependent clauses. Such has been our experience under this new plan of language development. Whereas the writing of even the profound psychologists showed less than forty-five per cent of dependent clauses, the writing of our seventh year pupils showed last year from 45 to 50 per cent of dependent clauses. In judging this fact, one should consider that the writing analyzed had been corrected by pupils and formed their permanent record. It had, however, not

been corrected as to basic structure by any teacher. The only question or correction of structure had been some modification of this one question: "Does this writing say what you mean? Does it tell what you found out?" If the pupil found that "We went to the children's hospital *and* we met the superintendent," the teacher accepted the sentence.

The reader should not conclude that the large number of dependent clauses indicates a greatly speeded maturation. It probably indicates only the concentration of the child's attention to matters of relation, since it is this element which has demanded effort.

There have been further gains. The limits of this paper do not permit explanation of the evaluations made of pupil compositions. Sufficient evidence is available to warrant the statement that there is more than usual school gain in the work of the group, in so far as clarity, coherence, paragraphing, and punctuation, are concerned. At the present we are so far satisfied with the results of our procedure that we feel safe in concluding that language development is best accomplished through a purely functional approach in which expression follows experience in purposeful activity, and in which we assume that the demands of integrated experience are sufficient to stimulate language growth.



"For, doubtless, right language enlarges the soul as no other power or influence may do. Who, for instances, but trusts more nobly for knowing the full word of his confidence? . . . There is a 'pledging of the word', in another sense than the ordinary sense of troth and promise."

—Alice Meynell.

# Editorial

## Trenches to Hold

ACCORDING to the survey report of the National Education Association's Committee on the Emergency in Education, more than 20,000 schools will be closed the first of April, depriving more than a million children of educational opportunities for the remainder of the school year if not longer. This appalling disaster to public school education involves two dangers of even greater evil than the mere closing of the schools. One of these lies in the temptation to child labor; the other, more insidious still, in the development of a public attitude of indifference to the widespread breaking down of the public school system of the country.

In recent years, in communities where compulsory education has been fairly effective, the insidious character of child labor may have slipped almost from consciousness. Nevertheless, even under good conditions, there have been tragic examples of child labor. In one state, in 1927, and thereabouts, child labor was made a political issue, with the result that enormous wealth was amassed at the cost of curtailment of schooling by three to four months a year. Year after year, the state federation of women's clubs fought losing battles with the state legislature, failing because the evil was deep rooted and defended by moneyed interests. There it was, deeply entrenched, even at a time when the rights of children were almost universally proclaimed. Isn't it true, then, that now, when the public is becoming calloused to the spectacle of unemployment, this crisis in the lives of hundreds of thousands of children must not be allowed to become an entering wedge for an evil which once initiated can be eradicated only with stupendous effort,

if at all. One has only to recall the sight of children trudging through the back streets of prosperous towns, in 1928 and 1929, begrimed and thinly clad, their meagre little bodies giving the lie to the tin dinner pails swinging in their hands, to be convinced that today, when sick industry is intent as never before upon vigorous recovery, children forced into the streets by the closing of schools will become quick and helpless prey if someone has not the vision and the courage to defend them.

The second danger—that of indifference to the present predicament of public education—needs to be brought well into the light. In the last three or four years, there has developed a public attitude imminently dangerous to the cause of education, and a willingness to accept, without appreciation, the sacrifices made by teachers to carry on the work of the schools. There is a question, therefore, whether it has been entirely right for teachers to undergo the martyrdom for which sentimentalists have so vociferously praised them. The president of a rural Parent-Teachers Association was recently heard to boast that during the current school year their school had an excellent teacher, and that they had been able to hold her on a salary of \$35 a month! Here we have a meanness that is not even conscious of itself, undermining the very foundation of public education, for any thinking at all reveals the fact that a few years more of this kind of small-mindedness will eventually turn away from the teaching profession all but the most beggared personalities, and in the end, the children will be the losers with community life crumbling commensurately.



## Reviews and Abstracts

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PUPPET PLAYS IN EDUCATION, by Earl A. Collins and Aruba B. Charlton. Published by A. S. Barnes and Co., New York, 1932. 135 pp. Price, \$1.00.

Although puppetry is very widely used in elementary schools today, and particularly by teachers of English and related subjects, very little of a usable nature has been written in the field. This book is the first to come out definitely planned for the use of those engaged in the teaching profession. The use and value of puppetry, both from the standpoint of the children taking part and of the audience, is thoroughly covered. This booklet includes a good discussion of the type of plays and work to be dramatized, and the technique of preparing the puppets and the other necessary paraphernalia, as for example, the stage, stage settings, and the lighting fixtures. Teachers interested in working with puppets and marionettes will find this book very interesting, and the illustrations will make its instructions easy to follow.

LITERATURE AND LIFE, BOOK ONE, REVISED EDITION, by Edwin Greenlaw, William H. Elson, Christine M. Keck, and Dudley Miles. Published by Scott, Foresman, and Company, Chicago, 1933. 640 pp. Price, \$1.80.

This book is the first of a series designed to cover the junior high school years. There are four outstanding points in this series worthy of serious consideration for the teacher who is searching for material on the seventh and eighth grade levels, and for the brighter students in the high fifth and sixth grades: (1) the large share of fresh modern material, including short stories, one-act plays, poetry, and humorous and diacritic prose; (2) the sound core of desirable classics; (3) the organization around central themes; and (4) the humorous, direct and simple helps for the pupil. As a deviation from the standard anthologies, this work contains a great deal of

material devoted to an understanding of life—particularly the social organization in which the American child lives.

THE STORY OF BEOWULF, by Strafford Riggs. Published by D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1933. 84 pp., illustrated. Price, \$2.50.

At last the great Anglo-Saxon epic, BEOWULF, has been written in a language that can be understood by boys and girls. The very nature of the dramatic content of this classic work causes the child to be enthusiastic about the story from the first paragraph. The author has been able to preserve the sonorous quality and the grandeur of the original by careful wording, without making the language too difficult for children of the upper elementary grades. Profuse illustrations aid greatly in the understanding and add to the interest of the work. In this book, Beowulf is brought to life as a living hero.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING IN YOUNG CHILDREN, by Lovisa C. Wagoner. Published by McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1933. 322 pp. Price, \$2.50.

Many recent works dealing with learning among young children have covered only one phase of the process. In this volume, attention is given to the manifold elements of the learning of young children, and the majority of the information is taken directly from scientific writing, thus giving soundness to the work. Rather obviously, some of the chapters are rehashings of material already familiar to teachers, but certain sections dealing with the control of the body, learning to respond to other people, mastering the emotions, laughter, and sleep, make the book very interesting to the average elementary school teacher. The further down in the grades that the teacher is engaged, the greater will be her interest in this work, for much of it actually touches learning on the pre-school level.